

The Wool Interests of the Abilene District.

Galveston News, September 1st.

The most important of the growing industries of this immediate section of our state, is the production of wool, as it is one of the leading interests of the state at large. It is more important because of its rapid growth, the very large profit accruing, and the fact that it is yet in its infancy. Until the last few years these prairies were occupied, after the extermination of the buffalo, by countless herds of cattle, and beef-growing was the chief interest in the section now tributary to Abilene, embracing a scope of country about 150 by 200 miles, between the western edge of the cross-timbers, in Callahan county, to the Colorado river. But the last year or two have wrought a change in the principal habitants of our prairies. The large herds of cattle have all been driven westward, and only the small herds are left east of the Colorado and south of the Clear Fork of the Brazos (on the map as Elm Fork). They have gone to give place to the pioneer settlers who have come and are every day coming to engage in farming and mechanical pursuits and sheep husbandry.

Statistics show that our population is increasing at the rate of 100 per cent. in every twenty-three years; that our 50,000,000 of to-day will be 80,000,000 in 1895, and will, at the estimate of four pounds per capita, require 350,000,000 pounds of wool to meet the demands of this country thirteen years hence. This country now imports largely of wool; and yet there are here in northern Texas alone millions of acres of as fine wool-producing lands as the eye ever looked upon, with plenty of water, abundance of nutritious grasses and a climate well adapted to the cultivation of wool—lands upon which could be grown, with large profit, all the balance of the staple now consumed in this country over and above the native production. In the woolen goods the trade is rapidly increasing, and unless the material is grown here it must come from Australia, France or England, where the industry is more carefully watched, and is considered a more important source of wealth. Here are all the natural facilities for producing the balance of wool for home consumption, where the cost is very light and the inducements so great.

Lands here are cheap; the best school and asylum lands can be bought at from one dollar to two dollars and fifty cents per acre, on easy payments and long time, with title direct from the state. A farm or ranch can be stocked with sheep at much less cost than any other stock except hogs, and, except this latter, returns will come in sooner and oftener than with any other stock. Less money is required for fencing, sheltering, feeding and wintering; and finally, a handsome income of forty to sixty per cent. on the investment without selling the animals themselves; the natural increase alone is from seventy to one hundred per cent. per annum. In several cases this spring the writer knew of instances where the increase was as high as 110 per cent. in large flocks, and seldom was it ever less than seventy-five per cent. this year.

We could mention several instances of wonderful success and profits on small investments which border on the marvelous, but not having at hand the exact names and figures, we will only give this one instance fully illustrative of this lucrative business. Fifteen years ago Mrs. Gordon, wife of Nelson Gordon, on Brady Creek, in Concho county, raised a petewelamb, and when it was a year old she put it in a neighbor's flock, where it brought a buck lamb the first year. The ewe and lamb were taken home, the ewe raising a lamb every year since, and is still alive, having raised its fourteenth lamb this spring. The increase of the pet lamb and the increase of the offspring were sold a few weeks ago, numbering 205, at \$3.75 per head. Mrs. G. reserved the old ewe, with which to make a new start. Any one curious enough to indulge in a few figures, will find this an interesting problem. The investment, putting the cost of the original ewe at four dollars, and compounding the interest at ten per cent. per annum for fifteen years, was \$16.25. The clip from the flock during the fifteen years doubly paid for the care of it. So, that we see the net outcome of the investment was, at \$3.75 per head, \$752.50. Further, if any one thinks the flock of 205 sheep is too large, a calculation will show that it is small—that is, due

allowance has been made for mutton and for dying.

Wool-growing certainly offers very superior inducements to those who thoroughly understand it; it is yet true that it may also be successfully conducted by men who have no practical knowledge of or experience in sheep husbandry, if they are willing to deny themselves the pleasure of society and the luxuries of life, and give their business close attention and study until it was established on a paying basis. Some of our most successful sheep men have never herded a whole day in their lives, and probably would not be a success as herders; but they know how it should be done, and are therefore competent to manage the business.

The wool-growing business first came to Texas through Mexico; the slow methods of that primitive country being first adopted by their American neighbors, who, however, soon began the work of improvement by grading their flocks from thoroughbred bucks and better care. This improvement was continued to a greater extent by the more enterprising men who have engaged in the business in this section the last few years. Thousands of fine sheep have been driven here from California and Missouri, and since the completion of the great transcontinental line of railway through Texas, the high-graded Merino and Cotswold ewes from California and thoroughbred Spanish Merino bucks from Vermont have been imported, until now our sheep are producing wool which commands a good price, and is continually improving, until northwest Texas will have a reputation for the fineness as well as the quantity of its wools. In the matter of improved grades, this section is advancing more rapidly than other portions of the state. This fact, to a great extent, accounts for the difference in quality of wool in favor of this section, and the difference in price per pound, which would at first thought appear not in our favor. Competent judges, men of experience in handling the wools of western Texas, say that in southern Texas the staple is much lighter than the growth in northwestern Texas; that the sheep of these counties being of a higher Merino grade, the staple is, though finer, much heavier with grease and dirt than the sheep bred from the Mexican of southern Texas. This theory will be readily appreciated by any one who has ever compared the fleeces of the thoroughbred Merino, long, fine, but weighty with the natural grease, and the Mexican, which, though very light, is an inferior staple, coarse and heavy. It is a well-known fact that the wool-growing business is more lucrative in this part of the state than in any other, and the yield per head greater; the product, though of finer staple, does not sell for quite as much per pound as the more southern wool. For instance, the Hilson clip, in Taylor county, of 16,680 pounds from 1,465 sheep, an average of 11.32 pounds per head, is the largest known in the state, and while it was a very fine staple, it was so weighty with the grease common to the Merino, that it sold here for twenty-four cents per pound, realizing about \$2.75 per head.

Tributary to Abilene are the counties of Taylor, Tom Green, Runnels, Concho, Jones, Nolan, Fisher, Stonewall, Haskell, and parts of Callahan, Coleman, McCulloch, Mitchell and Shackelford. From reports of assessors of some of these counties on the first of January last, the number of sheep may be estimated at 300,000, from which a product of five pounds per head will be marketed here this year. Of this amount 1,210,000 pounds has already been received at Abilene. The natural increase in sheep has averaged this year 95 per cent., and in many instances it was 105 and 110 per cent., which would nearly double the wool crop for the next season. Then the increase from imports from other states and southern counties has been from 15 to 25 per cent., which would more than double the wool clip of these counties for the next season. In one issue of the Abilene Reporter recently were advertised for sale 17,470 Spanish Merino rams and California ewes, from which the reader may form some idea of the magnitude of the sheep trade at this point.

The growth of this industry, it may be readily seen, is assuming big proportions. Abilene's importance as a wool market for all Northwest Texas is beginning to be appreciated, and next year eastern manufacturers will have

their buyers here to secure for their mills the superior staple which will be concentrated here from one of the finest sheep regions in America.

This being Abilene's first year's experience as a rival of the different markets for wool, the sudden decline and flatness of the market for Texas and the common wools all over the country operated to the disadvantage of this place. It was circulated through the country here that the condition of the market here was due to local causes, and the consequence was that quite a number of clips which would naturally have sought this as the nearest and best market, were turned to other points. The mistake was soon discovered, and redounds to Abilene's advantage. The receipts here for the season of 1880 were 450,000 pounds; this season 1,210,000 pounds, a gain of nearly 200 per cent., and we have every reason to believe there will be a correspondingly flattering increase next year over this. The Texas & Pacific railway has reduced the tariff on wool from Abilene to the eastern markets, which are about as low as from any other interior point in the state; this with the superior facilities for receiving, storing and shipping the staple, Abilene offers many inducements to the wool growers of west and northwest Texas as a market for the sale of their product.

History of the Tomato.

A good many years ago a scamp who had recently arrived from the Bermuda Islands was sent to York county jail for some offence committed against the laws of the commonwealth. He had with him a few seeds which he planted in the rich soil of the jail yard. Before the plant which sprang from the seed reached maturity he was discharged and no one knew the name or nature of them. They grew luxuriantly, bearing fruit of a large size and unusual appearance. As this strange fruit ripened, its color changed from green to a brilliant red, and became an object of great wonder and admiration to all the inmates of the jail. Mrs. Klinetfelter, the lady keeper, cautioned all the prisoners against eating any of the fruit, as she was sure it was poisonous, and besides she had promised the man who had planted the seed that she would endeavor to preserve specimens of it for him should he return in time.

Just when the fruit was fully matured the Bermuda prisoner revisited the jail and asked to see the plant. This request granted, he next called for pepper, salt and vinegar, and, to the horror of the good lady, commenced to eat the supposed poisonous fruit with a relish that astonished the beholders. After enjoying the strange repast, he informed Mrs. K., that the fruit or vegetable was the tomato or love apple, and that it would be found wholesome and nutritious. The seed of the remaining tomatoes were carefully preserved and distributed among the friends and neighbors of the lady, and thus this now popular esculent was introduced into the ancient and goodly borough of York. For many years thereafter it was cultivated as an ornament rather than for table use, but by degrees it began to be more fully understood and appreciated, and there, and elsewhere it grew into general and public favor.

The Arctic Winter.

It is a mistake to suppose that the Arctic winter in the highest latitude is a long, dreary one of utter darkness. The highest latitude yet reached by man is 83 degrees, 20 minutes 20 seconds, and there twilight lasts 4 hours and 42 minutes on December 22d, the shortest day of the Northern year. Man will have to go some 327 miles further North than he has yet done, if he is to reach the region of absolute darkness. The Pole itself is in the dark only 77 days—from November 13th to January 29th. There is a period of about 4 days in the year in which the sun is larger than the earth, and that his rays are bent by the earth's atmosphere in such a way as to converge upon its surface.

Don't Be Alarmed

At Bright's disease, diabetes, or any disease of the kidneys, liver or urinary organs, as Hop Bitters will certainly and lastingly cure you, and it is the only thing that will.

"Any good shooting on your farm?" asked the hunter of a farmer. "Splendid," replied the agriculturist, "there's a drive well man down in the clover meadow, a cloth peddler at the house, a candidate in the barn and two tramps down in the stack yard. Load both barrels and sail in!"

TRAPPING WOLVES.

Splendid Sport, If You do not Get Too Much of It.

Wolf stories are abundant in Siberia, and many of them of a blood-curdling character that is quite sufficient to deter the strongest hearted from wishing to have any dealings with them. In the most northerly part of Siberia the animals swarm over the country, particularly in the wooded parts, in large packs, sometimes even of a thousand or upwards. They attack men and beasts indiscriminately, and even have been known to make an attack upon some of the smaller villages, where their numbers enable them to do a great deal of havoc before they can finally be driven off.

But all the aggressiveness is not allowed to be on their side, for the men of the country seek every opportunity to diminish their numbers from various motives. Very naturally the people for their own protection desire to get rid of as many as possible, and a bounty paid in some quarters upon every animal killed is an additional incentive to the work of decimation. Then their hides can be tanned into excellent leather, and are in great demand and bring high prices. The fur is also very useful to the natives, being very heavy and warm, and is much used for trimming the large hood which Siberians of the north are accustomed to wear.

The animals are caught in various ways, sometimes by poisoned bait and again by traps. One of the commonest kinds of traps in use is a large circular pen surrounded by a high wooden fence. Outside of this fence is another similar one, perhaps two or three feet distant from the first and running entirely around it. In the center of the pen is placed a live deer or pig. In the outer fence is a small opening, the door of which swinging is left conveniently and seductively open. The wolf scents the live bait in the center of the pen and after vainly endeavoring to leap over the protecting barrier and get at it, finds the door standing open and at once enters in. The passage between the inner and outer fence is wide enough to enable him to move ahead comfortably, but is too narrow to admit of his turning about.

Once in, he must keep going straight ahead, and very naturally thinking that in this direction lies his prey, he presses on, licking his chops in anticipation of a rich feast. Having completed the circle of the pen, he arrives at his starting point and finds his further progress completely barred by the door, which still stands open as when he entered. Pushing against this, he shuts it close in order to get by, and has effectually made himself prisoner. Then the crafty huntsman, who has all the time been concealed within, shoots or spears the animal from the top of the fence, draws his carcass within, so as to save it, and opens the outer door again to welcome the next visitor.

When wolves are plenty, two men or more in one of these pens have a very busy time for a number of days and are scarcely able to slaughter or skin the animals as fast as they would like to rush in unconsciously to their death. It not unfrequently happens that the men are kept in these pens for a number of days at a time, being unable to get out on account of wolves, which surround them and would tear them to pieces the moment they made their appearance. The only thing for the men to do under such circumstances is to keep on trapping and slaughtering until the animals, starved out and disappointed, abandon their position and skurry off to another part of the country.

In the localities where the wolves are most numerous, wolf-hunting is regarded as a regal and is also a frequent sport. It is sometimes engaged in by large parties of hunters and again by one or two individuals alone. Like most hunting for sport in all countries, it is principally practiced by the wealthier men, who have both the time and the means and the daring to pursue it. The latter is a very essential qualification for the sport, for the man who engages in it literally takes his life in his hand. It is anything but boy's play to enter upon it, and a great deal of nerve and coolness, as well as skill, is required of the man who expects to come off unscathed. The slightest wavering or the slightest misjudgment may at any moment throw the hunter into the very midst of the hunted, where no power on earth can avail him for a single instant.

The slightest accident means not only death in less than a second, but also means utter annihilation for the man upon whom a peck of hungry, infuriated wolves leap; for almost before he knows what has happened he is torn from limb to limb—devoured, hat, coat, boots, and all, so that not a thread of him is left for his sorrowing friends to hold a funeral service over. It is, perhaps, this horrible fate that is always staring the wolf-hunter in the face that adds to the fascination of the sport, so that there are few who have the opportunity afforded that can resist the temptation or forego the exciting sport.—*Boston Bulletin.*

The Queer Things We Do.

Have you ever reflected upon the many funny things we do, for which we can give no particular reason? How is it that we do not give five cheers, two cheers, one cheer? Why is it that we give three cheers and no more?

Why is it that the majority of the people use the right hand instead of the left, and cannot help smiling at those who use the latter?

Why is it that a man cannot see a bundle of toothpicks without helping himself to one, when he does not need it?

Why is it that a small boy cannot let a thin-wasted wasp fly in peace, without furiously going for it with his new straw hat; or why is it that the small girl will always insist upon lugging home a kitten that has not even learned to open its eyes.

Why is it that when one asks us the number of days there are in a certain month, we always say to ourselves, "Thirty days hath September, April, June and November?"

Why is it that we turn to the right instead of the left, when the left is far more preferable, and if adopted would save many an accident on railroads and highways? The driver always sits upon the right of his vehicle; in turning to the right he is farthest away from the wagon he passes, and, unless he is an expert, he cannot tell how close he comes to the wheels of the man who goes by him; Whereas, if he turned to the left side, he could see straight down, see to the fraction of an inch how close he was approaching an obstacle, and thus avoid it. The engineer runs upon the right-hand track, and sits upon the right-hand side of his cab. The long, narrow locomotive, with its sand-tower, belfry and smoke-stack, is in front of him cutting off his observation. He can see only his own track, while the opposite, save at a distance, is almost wholly unseen by him. On some roads the reverse is the custom.

Custom, owing to causes we know not of, has established these curious precedents, and from observation and education we unwittingly do thousands of things that are, to say the least, funny, and that we cannot explain.

Wealth in Cotton Seed.

How much the South lost before the war from the waste of cotton seed may easily be estimated from the following statistics. The amount of cotton produced during the fifteen years from 1865 to 1880 was 46,675,591 bales, and for every bale of cotton there were 1,200 pounds of seed, or three times the weight of the cotton itself. The amount of seed wasted was therefore 28,005,354.6 tons. The manufacture of oil and its products has created such a demand for cotton seed that the price at the crushing mills was \$18 per ton last year, and will probably average \$20 in the future. At the latter rate the seed wasted during the last fifteen years before the war was worth \$560,107,092. Probably that amount represents not much more than half the market value of the manufactured products of the seed. During the first fifteen years after the war the amount of cotton produced was 56,438,835 bales, and but a small part of the seed it yielded was utilized. The average annual cotton crop is now not less than 6,000,000 bales, so that the amount of seed is 3,700,000 tons, which at \$20 per ton would be worth \$74,000,000 at wholesale. It is safe to place the value of the manufactured product of that amount of seed at \$100,000,000. It will be seen, therefore, that the wealth in cotton is about equal to half the annual expenditure of the United States government. When the nation manufactures all its cotton, as well as utilizes all its cotton seed, its income from the cotton crop will be more than double.—*N. Y. Mail.*